

INTERLUDES



PHILIP BECKER GOETZ



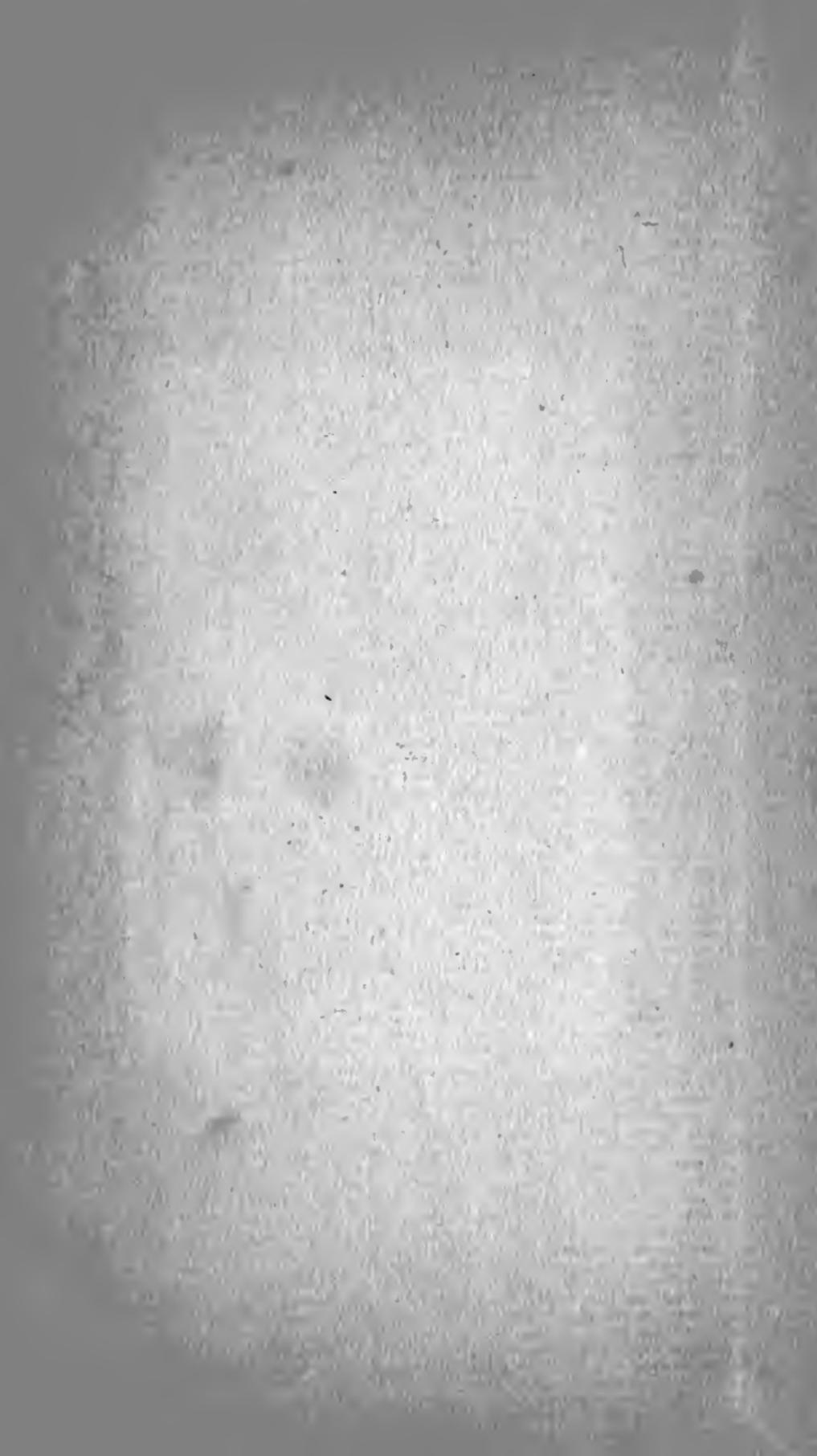


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INTERLUDES

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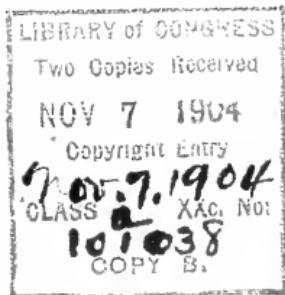
Philip Becker Goetz



Boston: Richard G. Badger
The Gorham Press

1904

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Printed at
The Gorham Press
Boston, U. S. A.

TO MY WIFE



THE GARDEN

*I sowed a garden in the air
For earth was full of death,
I hung it in a clime most rare
Where stars might give it breath.*

*I gave it the tears I never shed,
The kisses I dared not own,
Upon my secret soul it fed
And I knew joys unknown*

*(As if a man should verily know
The utter mystery,
The waiting mother's wondrous woe
And crowning ecstasy).*

*But e'en mine eye is far too weak
To follow where they fall:
My flowers it were vain to seek—
They drop to the lifted call.*

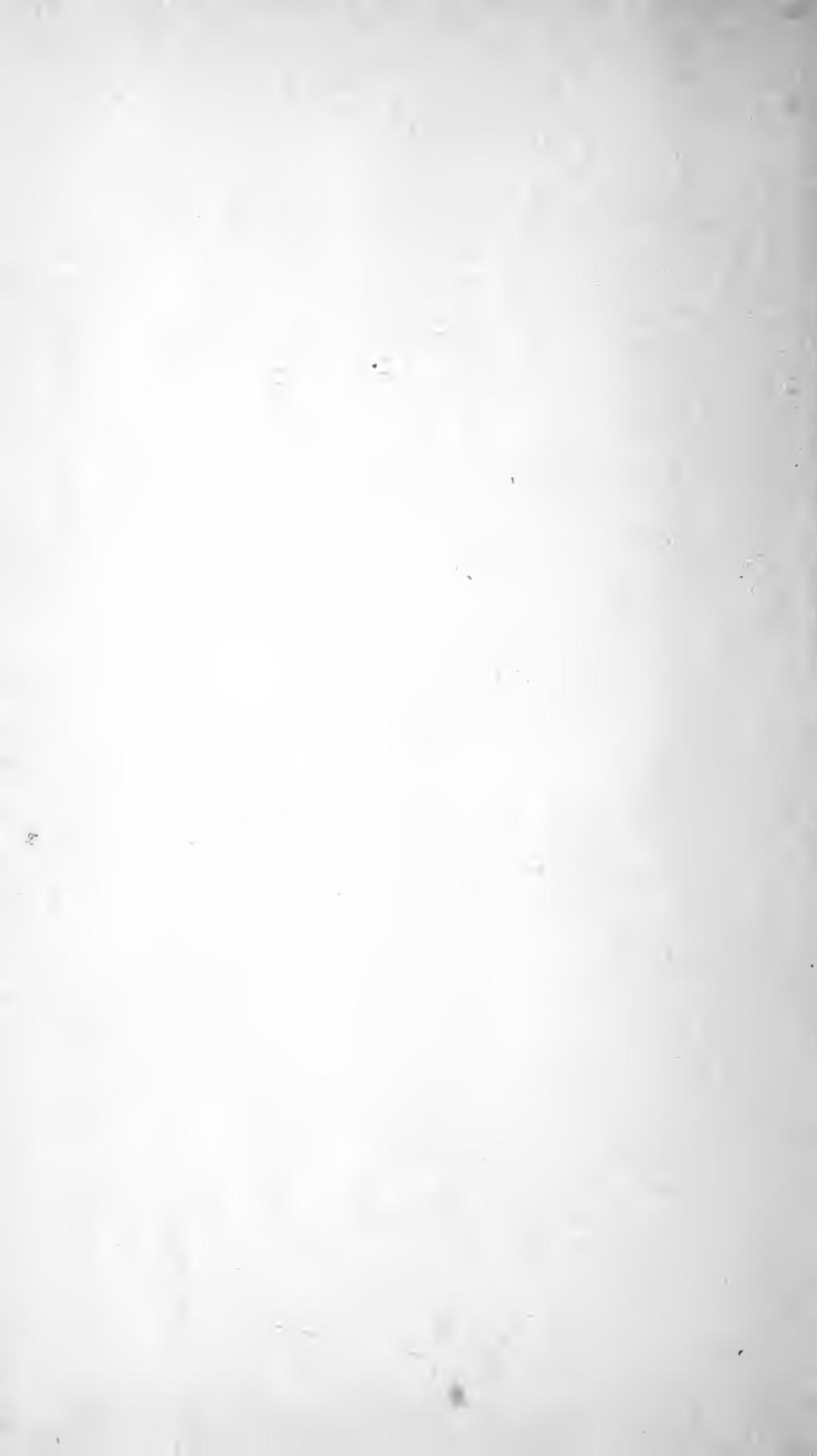
*Mayhap I in an alien land
Shall find my blossoms there,
Some undreamed girl with happy hand
Bind my rose in her hair.*

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INTERLUDES



SPRING

THE alchemist has busied her again
With colors, sounds, and shapes of bold effect.
The rotting mire she quickens at a touch
And startles to one palpitating croak;
Lips on the brown earth bubble into bloom;
Arrows are shot down from the frowning clouds
And burst into flame-breasted robin-calls;
The topmost twig of yon bare cherry-tree
Swells to a thrush trilling the warm dew out.
Some glowing land unto our cold land laughs
With shrill abandonment and ecstasy
At drowning other emulous shouts of joy.
Through the wise trees and grass and herbs and
plants
Runs shivering the hint of coming passion:
It is a time for revelry and song;
It is an hour when breath intoxicant
With treasured fever flings itself away
Into another's breath oblivious.
The love of life is rising to the lips,
The beauty of the world into the eyes;
Valleys and hills are odorous again:
Chill streams run tepider against the touch;
There is emancipation for us slaves,
Or trees or flowers or man,—it matters not—
Into the pure delirium of words,
Scents, saps; the rapture of expression's bound,
Coining the blood to dropping melodies
Till soul sways through the body like a song
Echoed through empty halls, unused of men.
So, rightly are these days made consecrate
To who would make us subtle syllables
In the wide chant God sings and calls the world.
Sweep me, great Breath, between Thine opened
lips,

And utter me a noble word to men,
That I may linger on beyond spent days,
Mayhap a memory to listening children,
Sending the stirred blood through the cheeks of
youth,
Bringing them trust of their own strength ~~and~~
truth,
Forging just lightning 'gainst the acted lie,
And cherishing the love that palsies wrong.

ASTRAY

I marvel not that sadder grows the world,
For men have lost the love of simple things.
With eloquence of nature's music mute,
With speed of waterways made bond to trade,
With stately trees brought low for needless heaps,
With flowers forced untimely into bloom,—
What is there honest, free, and fair remaining?
We stifle in our towns of prisoned air
And haply with a rare glance from the earth
We see a square of blue or curdled cloud
Or niggard stretch of moonlight through a street.
At manners of the hill-bound hind we scoff,
Although we know not what those hills have
taught
Of dumb and deep contempt for city's towers.
And in these keeps of pain, disease, and sin,
These wards of grief whose keys are our own eyes,
With blanched regard we tell ourselves we live.
O mother of us all, from whom we went
As early as our tender steps were free,
Whose near outstretch of arm we put aside
To hurry from thy verdant aisles of peace,
Take us again, us sick with thought and craft,
And lull us with thy choirs of careless birds;
And if there be more tragedy beneath
The swell of thy serene, sweet mother breasts,
Preserve thy silence and thy smile of old,
Make merry with thy children as we glance,
Let perfume charm and wonder awe once more
As, leaning to thy heart our tired desires,
We feel the oblivious beat of speechless love.

RUDEL

SCENE: *Deck of a galley nearing the harbor of Tripoli (Syria).*

RUDEL (*on a couch*)

GOOD men, lift me a little: I am fain
To look upon the wide sea under us
And so put from my brain the rage of fever
Which makes the ocean habit mortal mind.
I have for many nights been many men,
But now I know the stiller morning air
That haunts the long-sought harbor, loves the
land,
Waits like a heaven after earth. I would,
When we are come, that one were swift of foot
And sped him where my serene lady dwells,
Countess of Tripoli. They say (who know)
Her palace from the happy port not more
Than one league stands apparent, nobly strong,
With prop of Parian so fair and clear
That from its height it seems a sudden girl
Sending a white prayer seaward. But, I pray,—
Or 'tis mine eye or some close-veiling mist
That will not show that welcome in this hour—
There, let me sink. So held, I languid breathe.
Bid him who shall be messenger but say
One stays e'en Death to touch her living hand;
Say, too, he is a man of airy songs
That he hath gentler fashioned that she lived;
And that, like them, he reaches to the dark
And fain would have her voice to interrupt
The unquelled yearning of his ending years
In pity's blessed litany to ease
Outward the spirit issuing. Tell me!
Yet why ask I? I know we kiss the shore.

Ha! have I not oft felt the ship's heart stop
And felt it throb against the greeting land?
Away! I die each moment of return.

Enter A SEAMAN

There is no need of message: one comes here
With courtly following and bravest show.

*(Enter COUNTESS OF TRIPOLI and
Attendants)*

COUNTESS

Is this the poet, Rudel, of renown?

RUDEL

How come you to my side in this one hour?

COUNTESS

Think not of that: the rumor of your way
Outsped your own ship's weary traveling;
And I, my modesty aside, thus day
On day have fixed mine eyes upon the sea.
Live, Rudel, master of all minstrels born!
See—

RUDEL

Nay, your hand upon mine eyelids—so.
Not long: fast drift away the senses quite,
Fast into vanishment, smoke wedding air.

COUNTESS

Ah, not so, Rudel. Live another day.

RUDEL

Ay, many days, but none save in your soul.
To God I prayed and He was very good:
I see you beautiful beyond my dreams,
Beyond aspiring poem, melody;
The snaring hair, the soundless depth of eye
Are here; and I, content. Bend to me—Love!

(She kisses him)

He sings:

Love, are the stars with love so pale
(Far, oh far, from the moon away!)
Or is that two eyes fail?

Love, is this an amorous air
(Far, oh far, from the moon away!)
Or death, doth he kiss so fair?

Love, is this the earth of my years
(Far, oh far, from the moon away!)
Or heaven with human tears?

Love, is this a song that I sing
(Far, oh far, from the moon away!)
Or a soul on new-born wing?

Love, this is all I pray to see
(Far, oh far, from the moon away!)
Your eyes and living lips on me!

(Dies)

COUNTESS

The eyes are far. The mist sweeps down the hill.

A PRAYER

O THOU who art the world's quick heart of
flame

Inspiring and uniting all mankind,
Deny not to our need Thy glow and breadth;
Teach to our outward eyes Thy formal beauty
And to our inward eyes Thine endless truth;
And keep us ardent in desire of Thee
And sweeten to our use all sacraments
Of body, mind, and soul that we may live
In the white bounds of joy and purity,
Our summer souls on the cool steeps of search.

CALLISTO

ONE hot night in July up high o'er sea
The thirsty bears held discourse on their woe.
Arcas turned slow his eyes to where lay fast
By naught more palpable than Jove's decree,
Callisto, mother of him, maid too fair
For the exalted heart of heaven's lord.
"Mother, I burn. But thou, as now, so oft
Before this hour hast aye denied me solace
Of soothéd lip from the mere rim and touch
Of Ocean's cup. Wherefore, O mother mine,
Am I thus fretted with unending death?
Why must I see just at the birth of peace
Young Sol rise dripping from the quiet sea,
His hair auroral with fresh joy and love,
Making the earth voluptuously toss
Up to his passionate smile her girdling bloom?
Yet never may I suage one finger-tip,
Though ache and fierce delirium distress.
And ever as I ask and plead and spend
Vainly caress and tear, thou art not won
To solve my questioning, but addest pain
To pain, exhorting still to hide my woe."
Then the great mother-eyes looked full on him
And her drawn words came hardly to their birth:
"Arcas, my son, forbear to chide me thus.
Count I one ache less than thy manly sum?
Am I not parched as thou? Lean not mine eyes
With equal yearning toward th' untasted cup?
For that I am a woman and thy mother,
I suffer and am still, yet nevermore
Will I unanswering abide rebuke,
Though with the veil o'er my hid history
I pluck away thy love for me, thy mother.
Thou well rememberest that through thy youth
Thy grandsire, King Lycaon, brought thee up,

A stray flower of the wood of Arcady.
Alike that sire and thou were ignorant
Whence thou wast sprung, how noble was thy
line.
Why, then, we bathe not brow nor soothe the lip
With the cool wave, mark now my words and
learn.
I dwelt in Arcady, a princess born,
No less in honor than of royal blood.
When I went forth a mere girl through the
realm,
My way was strewn with flowers of every dye;
I was acclaimed indeed a princess born.
For that I was Lycaon's child not needed
They heap my progress with glad offices
Of love and signs of awe approaching prayer:
It lay that I was fair to look upon;
Children and men I made glad when I smiled,
And women feared me, few dared hope me friend.
I grew a virgin, proud and more proud ever,
For in my beauty's heart a certain strength
Seemed throned, and when I moved among the
court,
No task, no thought I envied not another.
Men vowed me justly hight Callisto, so
Mine eyes beamed with most honorable light.
The glade I loved: and one alone of women
I loved,—swift Dian, all day and at night
When crescent bow swung idle from her car
Untroubled as she measured trackless darks.
Me Dian loved. Among her nymphs immortal
None prized she more or with more candid voice
Summoned in confidence to scare the quarry;
Nor less was I the darling of her mates.
In what cool grot among what secret springs
With my chaste queen have I not bared my body?
Arcady knows no perfect pool but we

Have drained refreshment there with sleep secure
Along the guarded marge. But all joys end
When mortal are the hearts inhabiting.
One morning as I ranged the rising ground
Near Parrhasis before the sun looked o'er
The tree-tops, one—my queen, methought—stood
near.

She spake my name. I answered: 'My lady,
hail!'

Then further ran her voice: 'Is day yet drunk
With sleep and thou art eager for the chase?
What stag makes emulous thy bow of horn?
What dart divines the path to his gay heart?'
I smiled, ashamed; whereon, she nearer drew:
'Callisto, sweet, my lips are thine.' Tiptoe
I stood to reach her lips divine, but took
From them a sting responsive; I grew scared;
A strange fire seemed to start in her deep eyes.
I thought her angered and I turned to flee;
But it was vain: still stung that kiss and then
An arm—as little Dian's—strained me fast.
'Avoid not Jove!' the changing voice declared.
When I awoke, the sun was curtaining
The sky with spoils of his hot hunt. Homeward
I gravely went: I knew me virginless.
I dreaded Dian; but she smiled in dreams,
Beckoned me with the bow held toward my hand,
And pointed where the untouched deer escaped.
Against my will I sought the wilds again,
But with what weary feet and heavy thoughts!
Early I found her and she chided me
For that I left her train inconstant thus
And most unworthy of the hunter's fame.
Some faint reply essayed I in defense
And blushed therewith; and wonderment held all.
Thereon the nymphs were fain to bathe or ere
The chase began. I know not why or how

But a close, stifling horror made me shake
Now to reveal my body, for it seemed
Of right no longer mine: I stood the mark
Of pointed finger at another's shame.
If maids themselves, they were not slow to guess
Calamity in me, for as they saw
The rondure of my womb, abundant breasts,
And hungry look, with shame they blanched as
she,
The queen, with anger: 'Hence, out of my sight!
Hateful Callisto, violate virgin, hence!
I curse thee, faithless! Nevermore pollute
Or pool or sea or chaster spring with touch
Of hand or lip or body,—hence, for aye!'.....
By day I grieved, by night I wept for thee;
Cursed of the goddess, far from home went I
A solitary wanderer, in shame.
In a wild mountain-dell I brought thee forth
With no pain save thy one mad cry of joy
That seemed a jeer; thus well interpreted,
For, as I reached to lift thee up, my nails
Were grown long thorns; my face began to veil
Itself under a thicket of swift hair;
Unsightly, momently I changed. I tried
To walk, but fell to grovel like a beast;
I tried to speak: a raucous groan came out.
At the smooth recess of a fount I glanced
And saw me hideous with shape and snout
Of a loose-gaited bear. Still I recalled
My life, knew all the scenes, heard human sounds
As to Lycaon secretly that eve
I hurried with thee hung between my jaws.
He found thee, reared thee like the prince thou
wast,
Albeit unwitting. Aye I haunted thee
And, to my sorrow, frightened thee, my heart
No less thy mother's and my love no less.

Often I 'scaped thy weapon by the grace
Of Jove who watched between and over us.
One night, a night like this in hot July,
I cowered in the wilds, fearful of beasts
As thou of me, and gazed into the air.
'Great King of all the earth and sky,' I prayed,
'Thou who didst teach me woe out of thy joy
And madest me a stranger to white peace,
If there be place among the patient stars
And if their eyes may be incurious,
Couch me on clouds, abstract me from this earth,
Far from forbidden sea I fain would flee,
Far from polluted Arcady, far hence.
And if I ask a fate allowed my lips,
Grant at his mortal quelling, Arcas, too,
To keep me company that I starve not
By barren glances earthward when he dies,
For he is of my body, fruit of me,
And alien of the crime thy mind conceived.'
With upward palms as thus I prayed in pain,
Upward I yearned to Jove's own steadfast star
And waited, son, thy coming, cheering heart,
So cheerless else, with just the hope of thee,
The twin woe making joy, if joy be mine."
So ended she; and transformed Arcas turned
And with hot human tears down dropping fast:
"Mother of mine, never again shall I
Thee chide or superadd to sorrow, pain.
I blame not thee, for I have learned thy heart.
Parched throat of mine with thine more parched
is weak
To make me murmur to thy stricken ear.
Forgive me, mother, I will steadfast be.
I love thee more than death: I will not fail."

THE CREATION OF MAN

THE great God dreamed above the formless vault
(If vault may be the name when form was not),
And ever marveled vagrant faculties
When outlawry should cease and order reign.
Aeons were sped or ere the Father turned
And shook weariness off His members, sleep
From the long-weighted lids. Lo, where His eyes
Fixed glory of their glance, new-born the stars
Bloomed, myriads to echo radiance.
Half in the wonder of majestic might,
Half in delight, desire possessed His will
To seek the end of His star-waking eyes;
But end there was not. Endless as He fared,
Swiftly He glanced, and ever, answering glance,
Worlds burgeoned in the hollow mold of Chaos.
Weary again God sank upon a star—
O blessed star, to couch so grand a burden,
O blessed earth, if blessed be the issue!
There as He soothed divine His aching soul
In the bright bosom of the trembling earth,
Off the wide brow and dominant down dropped
On the ripe dust one bead of golden sweat
Which, in its new bed, sweet contending, bred
Instant prophetic, man. So man was made,
Imagined some Slav poet ages gone.

NIAGARA

I hungered for the birds and woods and flowers,
Smell of the springing grass and pungent herbs
And dear old ugly earth; and so my queen
And I hurried to nearest paradise.

I wonder if you know that braver rock
That juts out from the farthest Sister isle
Not toward the south away from violence
But toward the west, firm-footed in the shock:
There throned, we watched the rapids toss and
burst

To spume and dance in dissipated frenzy
Onward in ragged heaps to the last leap.

Hither they drop, wall after crashing wall,
Wide-thundering like to huge muniments
Swept by a raging scourge from out the sky,
And all the enginery and shapes Protean
Of horrid hosts accursed commingle here
With rolling roar against their rebel end.

These gemmy ramparts now in ire so molten
Appear an endless emerald undulant
Struck into precious pearls and diamonds rare
As rocket-swift they shoot up to the sun,
Swing forward, clustered in the laughing air,
And fall dead arrows in the white abyss.

Sometimes the deep a serpent monster seems,
In this, now that tough muscle taught to writhe,
And then to puff and bulge and hiss and dart
Dismembered tongues of snow made changing fire
Against the warm spring sun. Again, a giant,
Interminable in his awful length,
Vain beats his liquid legs on the stern stone
And ever as he struggles more and more
In moving, pinioned stubbornness of strength,
The more the strange beads blossom from his
brow

To teach no surcease of his woe or will.....
Come, love, the colors and the movements mad
Have thronged so swift the never-swerving eye
That now our rock rides phantom-oared to sea,
All turmoil stilled and we alone disturbed.
Hence let us deafly turn upon our way
Into the cloistral aisles of towering trees,
To where wild violets grow both bitter blue
And fragrant saffron bolder than her mate.
Be these our quest and with them we immure
Jocosely-preaching Jack in his fresh church,
And gentle-breathed anemones whose cheeks
From purply chill oft warm to pink delight
When e'er yon thrush-throat challenges the ear.
Mid these no trillia for too suddenly
Their snowy pennons droop in sick decay
And grieve our cheerier train—so let them go!
Yet let us add these fern-stems delicate.
These will we carry from our holiday
With that one thrush strain haunting memory,
These are our story from the thunder's breast:
Bud and bright blossom from the moil of waves.

THE DEATH OF KEATS

“SEVERN, has the nurse gone? Two days ago
And sick? I hope she has less pain than I
Here in my breast, empty but filled with fire.
Don’t think me strange, dear Severn, but when I
First wake from sleep I like so well to talk.
Last night before I went at length to sleep—
Midnight at least, I think—I saw your face,
Your open eyes on me, your love inquiring,
And I passed quickly to my happy dreams
(For all my dreams are happy, Severn, happy);
Not that I quite forget the daily ache,
But I am calm. After that Alfieri,
‘I have no solace, all my sweet is grief,’
No written word of poet has more charm.
Yes, I’ll obey: I will not tire myself;
Don’t worry, Severn,—there’s so little left.
I say my happy dreams—I call this happy:
I seemed in Hampstead on an autumn morning,
One of the kind when the sun’s red all day;
I carried in my hand a little book
And slowly walked across a field quite barren.
My little book seemed heavier each step,
And when I reached a near-by wooded spot,
I sat me down and listened to the birds.
They must have lulled me to a sleep in sleep,
For on a sudden I awoke and rose
To go without my book, without my burden,
When a voice gently called me: ‘John?’ I paused
But never turned: I knew the voice was hers.
She touched my arm—I feel the very place—
And when she came quite near, eyes questioning,
Her letter that I never dared to read
Returned to mind while she in mild rebuke
Said, with forgiving hand: ‘I have been wait-
ing’:

There lies my life and all that I have done.
They never scared me, Severn, with abuse:
I knew that better souls than mine were scourged;
But none have been more certain of their aim.
And yet for all the life that might be mine
If I recovered, I am filled with horror;
For I have seen so long ago, so long,
This day, and why my friends were overkind!
I love them all; one woman, too, I love.
I gave the world my all, ill mixed with good
Just like myself, just human in it all,
And wronged both ways—too much of praise and
blame.

You know that epitaph you took from me?
Be sure I never meant an idle wish
For tardy fame, only I feel the world
Cares little for the best a fellow gives.
Severn, lift me! I want to say it all.
Ah, Severn, all the love of friends can scarce
Atone for this, the brutal, killing truth:
How much good willingly the world foregoes,
How, work your mightiest, it passes by.
But they to me were beautiful, those moods,
Complete in nothing, merely fragments all.
Severn, I worry you. You shake your head?
You can't paint much these days—I know, I
know....
Well, I can't last much longer....Lift me up!
Severn, don't leave me: I shall die to-day."

TWO VIEWS OF A PORTRAIT

"PERHAPS you never heard her name, good sir,
Although you wonder they have hung her here
In sight of connoisseurs and all the dull
Who come (with catalogue) to look and like,
Or scan and sneer. Yet she was native-born,
A plant our own fond city bred and kept.
Suppose, sir, I, mere guide and hanger-on,
Should tell, as one who knew her well and long,
Her history; this day and all your days
Thereafter would be scant to sate your eyes.
Suppose I told you—you in the sleek clothes
And perfect gloves and gleaming turret hat,
A man of the grand world I know but half—
How many clutched damnation from her eyes;
Suppose I hinted how her hair made drunk
The other many; how her gait stopped short
The hurrying brokers and the men of trade;
How just one turn of the lithe neck toward you
And your quick body writhed as in a coil;
How when she spoke in certain tragedies,
The aesthete lived luxurious in sound
Nor cared for meaning of the utterance;
Suppose, in short, I glancingly described
A second Helen, witching trull and wonder,
A woman whom the world both in her day
And after she is dead, feels hunger for,
Who fills the musings of a million monks,
Rakes, poets, girls, dreamers, and awe-struck
mothers;
Why, then, sir, I should see (as now I see!)
Your eye dilate, your breath come short, your
veins
Bulge out in rapture of this beauteous monster.
It is the flesh, the ribald source of spirit
I touch when I contrive your fascination

By lying of the finest woman soul
God ever breathed sweet breath in and made
human.

Good sir, I lie not if I say no stone
In all the town but is more sanct she lived ;
No bawd but saw the way to second honor ;
No thief but saw his pelf too cheap to hold ;
No cheat, no fraud, no lying tongue that dared
That calm, grey eye and went on as before.
But why prate on ? I see you anxious, bored,
Impatient to behold next vivid splash,
Forget our modern saint and all her works.
You sigh that I have done. Just so the world,
Methinks, when that so true a woman died,
Sighed a long sigh of genuine relief,
So high her spirit, so severe the smart
Of her free life among the underlings!"

AUTUMN NIGHT

IT is no time for brooding on the past
And calling heavy cares to vex our souls :
Benignant are the stars in the cool night ;
The air is full of sleep and happy dreams ;
And mysteries are faring uncontrolled.
How regularly chirp the crickets, thick
In the sere grass, as if just so the throb
And cess of the big Mother-heart they marked !
There is no moon ; but where she hides I guess,
For harvest is upon us and no beams
Cold, isolate, and virginal, content
Us for our work in these unwonted hours.
She must new splendors borrow of the sun,
A fresh and ruddy face and pleasant eyes ;
Therefore she tarries from these fields and hills
And therefore are the solemn stars benignant,
In such a night as this I love the fields,

Not the grave forest with its beasts and shades,
But the clean, lowly fields all in their sleep
Swayed like the sea and telling their meek dreams.
The world in meditation mirrored lies
In these calm fields, these level, dreaming fields.
Sorrow and sin and woe and discontent
Have tasted poppy for a space, and spirits
Are strangers to the pain and strife of noon.
Only the bells will never hush the voice,
But from their fearless tongues drop one by one
Irrevocable down the long, deaf dark
The syllables of unremembered words.
A peevish hound, awakened, bays reply;
Another, smaller, echoes thin agreement.
The great bell answers not and all is still.
If this were now the end of the whole earth,
The sleeping fields composed no more to wake,
And that one stroke the passing-bell of life!
The calm of the dead earth would be so blessed
And whispers so run angel to the woods
As now this breeze, like winnow of wide hands,
Over the plains of heaving rest sweeps on
With benediction and sweet ministry.

THE CALL

ONCE more the wide, white world with timid
spires
Against the sky no faintest cloud obscures;
Above, riding the calm air, glory-crowned
Looks the white moon upon the whiter earth.
It is a spectral time to move alone
O'er fields untracked as air; to give an ear
To pressing silences; to feel the chill
Of the far north invade the hollow breast.
With some such majesty and awful calm,

Methinks, when utterance runs pale behind
The glancing guess, will come the trumpet's call.
No harsh blare scaring sea and earth and air
And dealing far destruction mightily
O'er crying multitudes on sudden knees;
But softly, clearly, universally,
Like fall of snow or voice of distant bells
Over a level plain. And there will be
No tumult of the guilty, dead or quick;
No judge with thundering charge against the
damned;
No upward sweep of devils toward their prey:
We in our cerements wasted quite to dust,
Wearing no semblance of the things we were,
Will summon back the soul from some warm star
And wake as children wake out of sweet sleep
Beneath the kiss upon their eyes; once more
The wide, white world will briefly know our
touch.
The moonlight and the snow above our beds
We shall put by as children coverlets;
And we shall rise each into what he would
And what is fair, the dreamer to his dream,
Lover to love, and singer to his song.
And they who wrought not in this mortal world,
Alone spent soul with body, these shall sleep:
The blessed spirits' passing on will be
Beyond their wakeless drowse, nor will they
grieve
More than one slumbering who neither knows
Nor heeds the marvel near his lidded eyes.

SEA-PIECE

WE had begun to sip our air again
And laugh upon our Indian summer come,
Hear thunder clap his wings across wide skies,
Watch clouds heap foam-globes in the whitening
 noon,
Listen for song-birds, muse at leafless trees,—
When suddenly the blustering North his blast
Rang out o'er earth and the quick-tempered sea.
Oh, I am glad one power dares his scourge!
When trees do bend and works of men bow down,
Tremble and totter and their brows are wreathed
With waste and desolation of the wrecker,
My heart leaps for the sea that loves to fight.
And I rejoice that when the wind on wave
Drives scoop and scoop into that valorous breast,
She hurls the hard brine bravely in his teeth
And for each wound springs but more fiercely up
And seizes the quick monster by the throat
And fastens wildly with her frothy fangs
Until he howls and begs for mercy, runs
Like craven cur to land where he may rage
With large impunity. Woe to the soul
That dares to trust his craft to fighting sea
And gale! They who have seen the fray have been
Accounted impious and worthy death.
Only the voices of the night confess
The story when the sea and gale engage.
Amid wild days of changeful, wintry months
When the cold creeps even through the soul and
 stings
You into anger, then the thought grows proud
Of the strong sea that waits the word of none
But deals as hard as the rough-knuckled North.

THE FALL OF THE DAMNED

BY RUBENS

A LIGHT shot life into my heavy sleep
And I arose and stood uncertainly
Upon the vagrant, mid-air rock, my bed.
Bound with the light ran unfamiliar voices
Of pain and sharp distress, endless despairs.
So swiftly coursed the white and dread confusion
That I gazed long distinguishing no shape
And hearing clearly none but unknown cries.
Then, as I stared and felt mine eyelids taut
As string upon a bow and felt my sight
Dart keen with utter pangs out into space,
I saw the reeling earth her uncapped tombs
Disgorging, lighted by the wrath of God.
Nor vexless frames and shadows of our forms
But fleshly as they ended in their sin
Down poured in bulky rain the horrid heaps.
Even the air turned scourger as they passed
And the calm angels smote remorselessly
And the cold touch of justice pinched, as deep
And deeper still they veered and flew and
plunged.
There were strong men who seized, as once in
life,
And girdled in their quickened arms of lust
Their broad-hipped paramours as luscious fruit;
And nuns with most penurious eyes were there,
Abandoned to the vengeance of hot fiends
Whose dagger-tongues stabbed their smooth
bodies till
They moaned in cheated semblance of a shriek.
One woman with hair gold enough to craze
Went toppled by a livid dragon-shape
Whose bossy snout sped furrowing her breasts.

Deep in the gulf where leaped a passioned marl,
The gaping figures of old myths grew quick
And laughed the length of their fierce, slimy
jaws,—

Here jumped to grasp a quivering buttock huge
And there a wanton by her yielding thigh.
And now the vast space yawned to thrice its size,
Great mountains swung from out their funda-
ments,

Shifted, and hung by narrow necks along
The gross, accursed earth, and took them tongues.
And with lamenting clangor thundered out
Immortal penance to the howling damned.

Therewith rang, too, the whelming ire of Him
Who sits upon the heavenly throne to judge:
To me most inarticulate His words,
But visible a herald troop of flames
Hissing and seething down like molten pillars
Or like mad charioteers careering on,
They issued, leveling the struggling horde
And plashing as in hollow dissolution
The mass of that corrupt, impure, defiled,
Degraded flesh. Whereat when all the sea
Had closed above the demons and the damned—
Who lay in one inextricable web
Of limbs and hair, closed jaws, and lewd
embrace—

Had soothed its fever into dimpling jets
And these again had drawn their poutings level,
The surface long was murmurous with moans:
Again the protestations of remorse
Muffled and clogged pulsed upward to the sky;
The very instruments of torment seemed
To learn the weary agony of death.
There while I mused and utmost downward
stared,
My breath regained bade lift my flooded eyes,

And lo! where floated forth in idle ease
The once filled earth, a vacant, dying star.

OCTOBER

IT IS the time when trees become severe
For that the poignant frost all in one night
Has burst the veins of every aging leaf
And decked with gaudy death the silent scene.
Oh for a sober pacing in the woods
Paved with the chatter of the dead, dead spring!
To halt in some sequestered, echoing haunt
And watch the balanced drop of sibilant leaves
Darkling the drooping sun. Then from the earth
Where breed in hollows moist thin, noisome
gnats,
Lifts gradual like unto incense dank
A cold and clammy mist, a veiling chill.
When thus among the trees I meditate
And in the solemn woodland aisles give ear,
I seem to breathe a mediaeval air:
Monastic mysteries and gorgeous altars,
Relics of martyrs, heroes, saints, and kings
Sow thick their precious dust within my mind—
Rich as the pollen on a chance bee's thigh
That starts strange blooms among the various
meads.
Ever I wait, nor long must wait in vain
For just a catch from some stray, braver bird.
And when his stout song diadems the dusk,
I keep it treasured through the winter's rage
Till skies do once more weep and buds are born
And high o'er gentle grass the young clouds race.

MARY REPLIES

“I, MARY, Virgin Mother of the Christ,
Abide your questioning, O Zacharias,
In every age henceforth forevermore,
I dumb with marvel as with doubting, you.
How will you credit me, now, you who smiled
Incredulous on God’s own Gabriel?
What word will visit these my woman lips
Persuading you who tranquil barred the force
Celestial of that angelic voice?
Immune of earth’s confessional am I,
Yet unto you as unto your sanct spouse
I gladly bare the record of my soul.
It was a balmy evening and we walked
Under the bursting canopy of stars,
Elizabeth and I, in mild discourse.
There passed us on the highway one attired
In raiment gorgeous from her sin, a girl
Unknown, but in the company of one
Who all his youth had loved too well the world.
Whereat we wondered what could be her heart
Where womanhood might never calmly dwell;
It was not gathered skirt to shun the taint
That moved us, but the awed and dread respect
Of self, disrupt and published,—common barter.
And ere I slept that night I prayed to God
And said: ‘Father and Spirit, hidden far
From eye and sense of us who fain would search
Thy ways, look down with pity on Thy world.
Let us not stray beyond Thy sweet recall
As she whom we beheld to-night, the stranger.
I ask not that Thou tell me quite the woe
Of all who breathe, but O great Lifter-up
Of those who bend beneath their scourging sins,
Grant to the lowly, such as I, a part
In comforting and aiding all who need.’

And then I slept; and, as I slept, I dreamed
A shape, of feature indistinguished, stood
Before me like a pillared flame, white, soft,
And swaying. Like the whisper of a tree
Where leaves and buds thrive murmurous in
springtime

With joy of their near message unto men,
It sought mine ear and whispered: 'Fear thou
not!

Thy prayer God answers with his heart of
hearts:

I am His holy Spirit and I seek
Thee out to make thee mother of His Son.'

Whereat I shuddered and grew pale, then
fevered,

Rubbed my wild eyes, and strove to calm my
brow,

And then again I saw the white flame there
And heard the Spirit voice run mellowing,
Insinuating ardor with new peace.

Once more he spake divinely musical
And as a priest might speak in sacrifice
To his own lamb which he devotes to God:
'Bare white thy breast, O Mary, chosen heart,
And as I pierce thy bosom, knowing pain,
Cry not aloud, but with the issued blood
Anoint thy brow in token of God's visit.'

Thus it befell and so I crimsoned brow.

And in the morning when I woke anew,
My brow was clean, mine eyes wore wondrous
light;

And through my soul coursed fervor of my love
With certain faith that I should bless the world.
And once—praise to sweet Jesus, my dead son,
Who lives and reigns with God the Father aye—
Once more I saw that woman in the flesh
Come from the Pharisee, come radiant

From washing with warm tears Christ's weary
feet
And wiping them with lavishment and spread
Of her own glorious hair. So good is God."

THE UNKNOWN FACE

"No, that I never change, my friend; always
It looks down from the height I hallowed it,
Looks down as might on maid her virgin saint.
It is a likeness: whose I never knew
Nor fain would know, so angel has it been;
'Tis of a man who wore a woman's face,
Which is as if one said: 'Some perfect soul!'
I well remember how I found it first:
The rainy winter night; my sodden shoes;
The dim light near a dirty stall whereon
Lay heaped in vilest kinship, king and lout,
Hero and murderer, poet and cheat;
And how a penny made me lord of it;
And how I guarded it beneath my coat;
And how thereafter soon I framed it rich
And hung it high to garland it with gaze.
Never the white hair shows less silvery,
Nor less in kindness droop the sweet, soft eyes.
See the far-scenting nose and the thin chin,
The wrinkles near the lips as if some ripple
Of laughter found immortal charactery.
One who saw far and deep in thought's demesne
And lived with no less charity mid men;
Lived, sir, I say, for to that mirrored eye
I dare not lift a trifling, worldly glance
Without a sudden breastward pain therefrom.
Am I too fond? Dream I beyond men's wont?
God makes for earth but one face like that face,
The others in his heaven sing to Him!"

BEYOND

WHEN with the thoughts of what we are to be
We move in company and gently trace
A way through meads of speculation pied
With many-colored lifted hopes, at last
There rests on beauty of the brightest joy
A wistfulness, a mark almost defeat.
We shall awake out of our ancient sleep
And we shall stand glad face to face revealed
Before the spirits we have loved on earth
In fleshly sojourn or in life of mind.
Yet for all masters of the mighty past,
Methinks, too much of worship may have changed
Our nearness and too much of distant love
Have chilled our earthly ardor. These are souls:
Their names and unknown lives were on our lips
A kind of prayer, and death with awe them
crowned.
Still would our younger spirit-hands be loth
To touch our sudden-wise contemporaries.
I know that I should fain see those I loved
On earth and in the flesh, those who loved me;
The grander ones have never known my moods,
Tyrant despairs, bold leaps of hope, strong pains;
They never knew me and forgave my faults,
And brooked impatient flashings and reserves;
They have not wept with me, and their warm
hands
I never have delayed within mine own,
Half-shaming that my manhood knew such love;
Their eyes are bright, but not with human tears,
And all their ways are of another time.
Not with the angels and the shining host
Be I enrolled forever mate and comrade,
But rather with the struggling few I know,
With whom I fought in hate and whose dear love

Cheered courage in my weakling veins to fight.
Still would I fight my fate, still ardent love
My new-dreamed charge; but firm with holy fear
That, when I pleaded pause and faintly begged
For craven peace, enervate hymns, and bliss,
I then deserved no meed but this defeat—
Retired from fray because my spirit ebbed.
For the one thought that dares walk straight to
God

And all the sanct and storied hero-band
Is that we will to make us worthy peers,
Nor ever of ourselves deem summit gained,
Meed due, applause hurtling across the skies.

POETAE APOLOGIA

“SIRS, masters, judges, you have summoned me
And here I stand to answer for my life.
You charge me with a treasonable crime—
The song I wrote about the prince’s right
To bid men ’gainst their wiser wills do battle.
If I must sing, you say, the song should be
Not so infectious in the lilt and thought
As make ten thousand men drop down their arms
And shout for craven peace against their lord.
Why, sirs, I have been all my life the man
You see before you now, an obscure poet
For the past forty years marrying rhymes
With strenuous endeavor toward the truth.
Chance thrusts a noted theme and from my town,
My Marricour, low-lying by the sea,
I, hitherto unknown,—a mere chaff-thing
Kicked by the breath of vilest artisan—
Rise a majestic stock to threat a prince.
I am the same, ’tis you who suffer change.
Compound of the sea’s wit and th’ idle sand,
I weave a miracle of treachery,
Truth from the Prattling shell a mere fool finds
And listens to and hands unto his neighbor,
And so it passes on until a town
Revolts against the settled state it knew,
Raps a prince soundly on his tender ears,
Makes buzz his ministers, and wins a name.
What mockery is this to bid me plead
Against myself, beg paltry breath, ask just
A little longer watch you strut and prance,
Armed in your travesty of Right and Law?
Sirs, ye who would I call you patriots,—
The name I sicken at—ye are not leal!
Ye are the traitors, I, the loyal son!
The land we live in is no petty plot

Of inland ignorance and hollow vales:
The great seas touch our strands, all the wild
winds

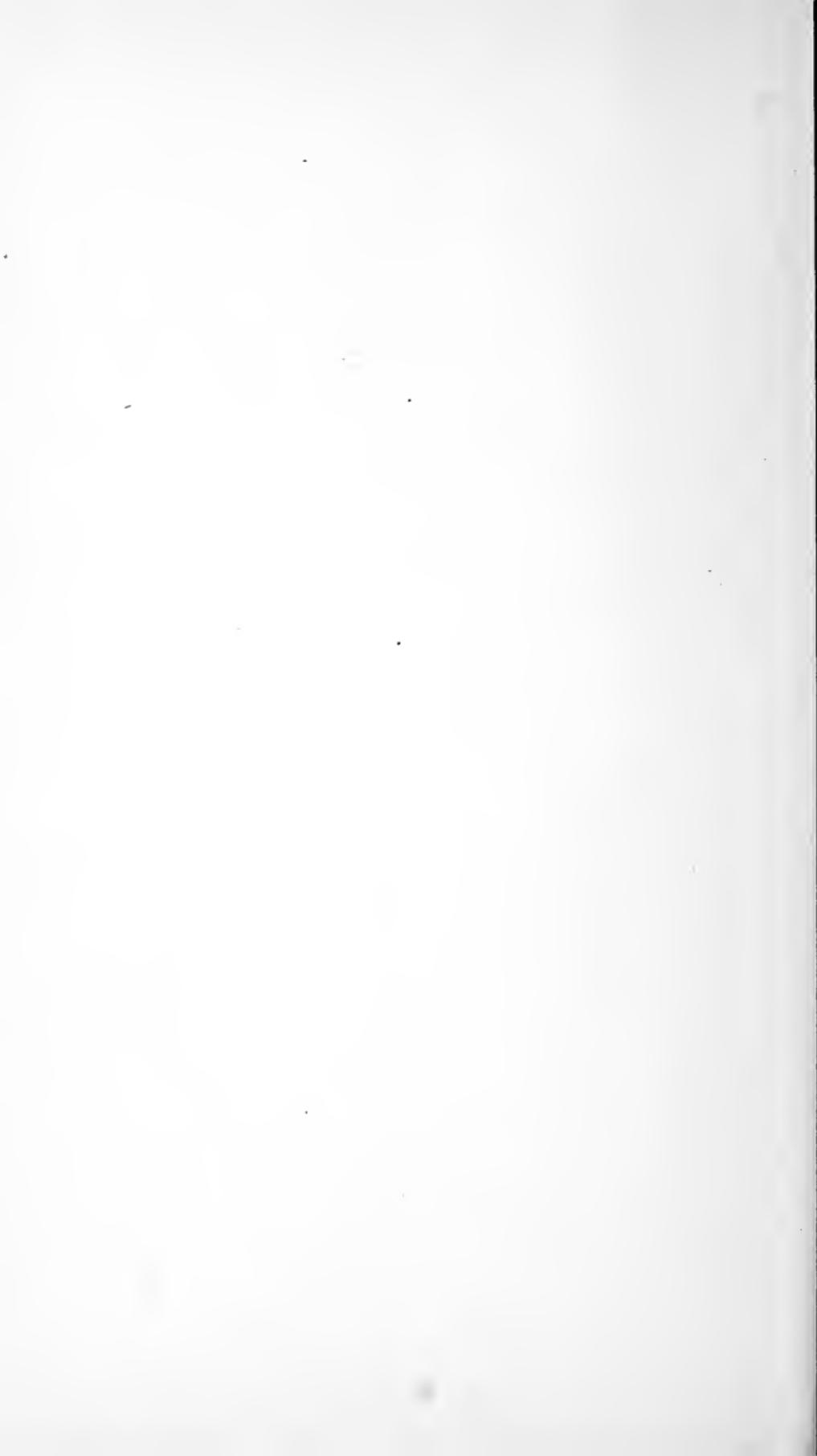
Converse above our cities, and the sun
Looks on no coast but in it we have share;
With such a fatherland, such a high fate,
You may not with injustice stop the breath
Of the most idle bird heart-sick with song.
The deed that is not just belongs not here;
And he who counsels doing of that deed—
Be he a peasant or a crownéd prince—
With aim to mask it by his country's name,
Is not a patriot, but a traitor, sirs!
Pardon my passion and my heated words.
If I have wounded one of you, believe
It was not out of hate but out of love.
I love my land; she is so throned within
My soul that gladly would I die for her.
I would not have her stained with impious blood!
This noblest nation owes the most to God:
Her citizens are priests; her streets are holy;
Her commerce is the law of love and peace;
Her homes are temples which we may not blot;
Therefore, dissuade the prince, make now your-
selves

The victims of your wrath toward other men
And judge whether a poet may not dream,
And, dreaming, tell the truth to waking men.
But if it be the prince's will prevail
And I denounced a traitor to my land,
When I am dead, let those ten thousand men
I counseled disobey the princely hest,
Scoop me a deep bed in the shifting sand
That my good mother sea may sway my bones
And sing her endless song—grand poetess!—
To mine unheeding ears and my cold brain
Which once she caught and swept to ecstasy,

Thrilling my lawless tongue to utterance.
Sirs, I perceive you smile upon my flowers,—
But from my soul they spring and they are
yours.”



TWO BALLADS



GRADLON

A Breton Legend

“YVONNE, bethink thee of the end
And of our common love;
Where Gradlon keeps the key thou knowst,—
Haste where he dreams above!”

Thus Bernadet to fair Yvonne,
King Gradlon’s only child;
And breathing deep she held his eyes
Close to her own eyes wild.

“Long since I promised thee this boon,
To seize the silver key,
Unlock the sluice near Penmarch Rock
And free the fettered sea;

But oh, my heart is full of fear,
My hand a woman’s hand;
And whom we fain the sea would choke,
Loves me above his land.”

“Thou lovst not me, Yvonne, I swear—
I swear it on my faith;
Else wouldst thou rid me of thy sire
And make great Ys a wraith.”

“My city Ys I love but so
As were she a good nurse;
Yet would I know by what foul deed
She merits this thy curse.”

“Not one word more, untoward wench!
Myself will do the deed:
While he lies murdered by my hand,
Ys shall glut carrion greed.”

“List to me, Bernadet, I pray,—
Herein am I thy peer;
I spake to try thee in thy love,
Thy life to me is dear.

It is the true wish of my heart
One day to be thy queen;
That I will serve thee faithfully,
This night it shall be seen.”

“Bring, then, the key and the treasure-box,”
Brake in base Bernadet;
“Bran swore me true to loose the lock
And boat across the Bay.

By the north hall where we oft have waged
Sweet riot and wars of wine,
There will I wait thee. Haste thee now
While the sickle moon doth shine.”

The moon was paling King Gradlon’s face
When another face came between;
The face of the ingrate, wanton Yvonne,
A woman who would be queen.

Wake not, great King, lest thou shalt hear
The sound of treasure and key,
And the hurry of stealthy stepping away,
Away to the waiting sea.

“Here am I, Bernadet,” she breathed,
“It is a realm I hold!”
“Then, he is dead?” “He was so white,—
And his hands were both stone cold;”

“An he were dead, there were small need
The city of Ys to drown.”

“Then, greater the need now Bran be leal
And we make Quimper Town!”

“Hist, Bran! to the sluice—and fare thee well:
God curse thee if thou fail!
Now for our steeds in the court below,
Hence to the Arré Vale!”

A white face fronted his face of flame,
A clean sword smote his throat:
“I dreamed, Bernadet!” King Gradlon cried,
“Rot there in a redder coat!”

And the voice of a strange monk burst between:
“Saint Corentin am I.
I bid thee mount for I hear the sea
Rise with a hungry cry!”

King Gradlon gathers the wan Yvonne;
The holy monk leads the way;
Mid the lifting flood they are skirting the line
Of long Douarnenez.

King Gradlon’s grey won the side of the monk
Who rode a steed blacker than night;
The sweep of the sea sang about the smooth ears
Like rain of a lash’s might.

Their nostrils fought with the smart of the brine;
Their chests grew deep with strength;
In the race for the life of the King they loved
White sweat crested over their length.

They fretted the rocks of the rugged shoals;
They whipped the foiled hollows to froth;
They hammered the sand and they wasted green
things
And up leaped light as a moth.

King Gradlon's grey out of very love
Will never gain Quimper Town;
He stumbles and staggers and shakes his wild
neck
And the King with a kiss leans down.

Like a goad it stung the hard flesh of the brute
And he plunged with maddened fire;
But his burden asked more than his brawn could
give
And his heart held bodements dire.

'Twas then at no cess of the hounding tide
The black-mounted monk drew near;
And he seized from Yvonne the treasure-box old
And hissed in King Gradlon's ear:

"The dam of all devils rides with thee, great
King!
She burdens and breaks the grey back;
The wanton Yvonne is thy curse and thy death,
Her body and soul are hell-black.

Hurl her from thee, O King, cast her into the
sea,
The sea that will never ask why!
It is thine, mighty Gradlon, to choose thine own
fate
And a trull of thy loins to deny!

I am Saint Corentin who speak,
I fed thee at Ploare:
With an only fish I gave thee a feast;
I healed thy hunting-scar.

And now I fain would aid thine arm
Thy kingdom firm to hold;
And this to save thou here must heed:
Destroy Yvonne the bold!"

Lower into the deepening sea
Began to sink the steed;
And shrill the pale Yvonne did shriek,—
Such woe was her own meed.

Again Saint Corentin drew near:
"O Gradlon, purge thy fame!
Kill the vile leman! With base Bernadet
She did the deed of shame!"

Snow-white as the hair of Gradlon the Great
Then waned that kingly face:
As a bitter thing spewed, the King cast off
Yvonne with no word of grace.

The steed upreared like a bodied dart
And skimmed the tardy waves;
And the monk followed close with the treasure-
box,—
Behind lay two villainous knaves.

* * * * *

King Gradlon the Great lived many a year
Thereafter in Quimper Town;
And no sound of Ys aye troubled his soul,
None menaced his well-saved crown.

Sometimes at night the childless King
On the shore would wander, they say,
As a sad song swam from the midst of the sea
Over Douarnenez.

A song of sin with no thought of ruth;
A song of the fever of guilt;
A song of desire forgetful of kin;
A song of a drunken hilt.

And from the shore the king returns
Each time a whiter King;
And the story he hears in the wild sea-song
Makes Yvonne an undying sting.

And once from the shore no King returns
Nor ever a message or word;
But the wild song out of the heart of the sea
Is dumb as a stricken bird.

Long, long they watched and waited for him
And fasted in pious dread:
But of all, I wis, than Saint Corentin
None better knew him dead.

THE HEIR

ELISE my mother—her Count Pasquin won
And let her die at yonder tower's base
Among the fallen leaves, herself a leaf
Blown hellward from God's spreading tree of
grace.

Me she abandoned one cold autumn night,
Me like a burden dropped, a thing of shame.
Old Anna found me as she drove her sheep,
Gave me her old flat breast, gave me a name.

One day I tripped upon a grave and fell,—
Prone on whose grave but hers within the park?
It was the day I walked hand close in hand
With Ariette, my love, till envious dark.

I knew she was the daughter of the tall,
Grand, awful Count whom all obeyed in dread;
But also I was ware she loved my face
And of degree no brooding vexed my head.

So life was sweet until they deemed it well
To save her ere too dangerous desire;
And vain were all young tears and secret trysts:
The Count would have her safe from every
fire.

And he was cheated—God be praised for that!
The burned-up beauty of her they brought back
And solemn buried in a golden chest
And covered all the vault with white and black.

Purple and ruddy flowers had been my choice:
First, fleur-de-lis, and passionate rose-bud next;
I should have pressed the birds chant litanies
Nor found in any eaten book a text!

Then, when poor Anna saw me dying so,—
Inch after inch subsiding to the bone,
The luster of the eye leap fitfully—
She said: “Be strong. The truth must now
be known.”

How Pasquin sought Elise in her rude home
And won her to his pleasure and her woe,
She there rehearsed as once to her Elise—
So soon to vanish like an April snow.

Not one word that she spake but gave more
strength;
I felt hot life swell my triumphing veins;
And with amending days my spirit teemed
With aims, as vines with clusters from rich
rains.

He was alone and reading from a tome
That thrilled with many a deed of ancestor,
As I, a spurned shoot of that selfsame stock,
Made entry unannounced and closed the door.

He took the danger of my forward gaze:
The pistol aimed out of his hand I hurled;
And ere we ceased discourse, it stood agreed
That I, acknowledged master, dared the
world.

Pasquin? Ay, he is dead. I am the last.
Elise and Ariette and Anna dead,
In whom I lived my life, to these me, too,
Some autumn with its leaves will shake and
shed.

EIGHT SONNETS



JUDGED

METHOUGHT my mother-country, she whose fame

For freedom grew with every morning-glow,
Stood where they stand alike, both friend and foe,
Before the eyes that search and show all blame.

I saw Egyptian Ramses blush with shame,
And Xerxes from this shore with panic go,
And matchless Caesar pale at swordless woe,
And many more of late though equal name,
Hurry to dim retreat. And when He heard
My young, sweet mother lift her great soul up
And proud recount the story of her life,
Those eyes rained fire, the wed lips woke to strife:
"O child, less taint to me than mortal cup
Of Christ my son than thou of broken word."

SHAKSPERE

Not like a pilgrim faring to one shrine
Whereat by dropping knee in faithful awe
All the cold sin of soul begins to thaw
And rise and runnel cheek with purging brine;
Nor like a close-mewed nun in rapture fine
Waiting the coming Christ and the new Law,
Watching and waiting, grudging breath to draw
Lest human sound disturb the soul's incline
From peak to rarer peak,—not so, great Seer,
Theeward fare I or wait a mystery,
For thou art master minstrel of all ways
That know the press of human foot, thy praise
Is that the good thou wouldest not deify,
And that the ill drew from thy lips no sneer.

SOUL-VISION

IN Eden, night. Beyond its pale the twain,
Close hand in hand, bright from the barrier light
Sequent and waning, wandered speechless quite,
And in their broken souls an alien strain.
Virgin of blame and virgin of love's rain
The hours of tardy exile went while sight
And sleep their combat waged with equal might.
Upon the hard earth Eve from very pain
Slow fell and slept; but Adam watched and lo!
From out his breast there burst a white-winged
bird.
Starward she aimed and found her airy nest;
But not for long: wide-eyed he traced her quest
From star to star with each new height upstirred
Till the wings died above the morning-glow.

BEETHOVEN

THESE are not meant for thy slight fingers, child.
Thy teacher's praise, the hall's applause I know;
The rippling wrist I follow with its flow
Of conquered wonder till my mind is wild.
A mere girl still, all unrebellious, mild,
Untutored in the woes that make us grow,
An unsunned flower, bred of very snow,
Unscathed of fortune's thong and unbeguiled
By faithless friends, thou canst not dimly hear
The surge and beat of that tempestuous soul.
Wait till thou hast the secret of a cloud
Or wearest thy grief lone amid the crowd,
Then from thy touch shall in grand thunders
roll
The agonies of this mad-chanting Lear.

AFTER-BLOOM

As when in some sequestered, cool recess
Of arching bough and aimless drooping vine
Within a wildwood holy to the trine
Of Hope, Desire, Surprise, there falls a cess
Of wandering and in a green caress
Of air and earth you sink and all resign
Save that one glance that in its loose confine
Brings to your doubting hand your heart to bless,
One tardy violet; so, love, are grown
The wildwood hearts of us by love made sweet,
Wherein, each wandering a thousand times
Amid the balm or rigor of all climes,
There cannot fail half-dreaming eye to meet
Some tardy violet till now unknown.

VERGIL

A MERE pale boy, who, watching docile sheep
On mead and easy upland o'er and o'er,
Wove many songs with young Sicilian lore
The while his spirit with increasing sweep
Longed to be where seven hills in starry sleep
Saw done the dauntless deeds, saw spent the gore,
Saw drop the vanward bird and sink who bore,
Until one master stemmed the battles' heap
And reigned a prince of peace,—the high renown
That mother-city of all cities born
To celebrate and rumor through all time
With the grand pathos of her bright, dead prime,
Was that pale boy's, whose very glories mourn
As if they knew immortal rides no crown.

DUSK

LIGHT dim enough to limn the waning blur
Of waxing buds and leaves against the sky;
Wind low enough to be the little sigh
Of fledgling spent with teaching wings to whirr;
Here where I look and listen not a stir
Of air or thought but seems to solve and die
Into the seas of calm that round me lie
Like languid sorceresses melting myrrh
About my yielding temples. How Thy years,
Great God, for all the gradual step and slow,
Are sudden when we muse upon them dead
And miss the precious who to them are wed!
Thy world is written and re-writ with woe:
A palimpsest tear-cleansed for riper tears.

GLORY

WHEN nights are moonless and the air serene
I love with questioning eye unsatisfied
To gaze upon the stars as on they glide
In metric silence over lives unclean;
Or feel with veiled eye a dimmer sheen
Steal through the brain and fling its portals wide
To unseen worlds that from the sight fain hide
Of armed astronomer with vision keen.
On him I muse who warned in days afar
How star from star in glory differeth,—
Holding the pathos, too, quite close to me:
The nameless ripples of earth's human sea—
Till answer whispers with an angel's breath:
"Inglorious to earth, but yet—a star!"

VARIOUS POEMS AND SONGS



THE MEADOW-LARK

*THE young sun runs above the field;
The dun clouds wheel and yield;
A happy omen,—ah, but hark!
The meadow-lark.*

Like a spring in barren sands,
English word in alien lands,
Sudden clasp of parted hands,
Instant sweet,
But fleet

As an arrow that aims in vain
And this side dies with pain,
I have heard him this many a year
Sadder each time, for I miss the cheer
You say is in his song.

What will the meadow-lark sing to me
As I listen and wait through the morning long?
A pensive strain of a heart half-free,

The matins of a walking bird,
A peripatetic prayer till heard;
Monotonously real and bare,
How purely it essays the air
Aspiring to win God's ear!

Ah, had he learned in his childhood days
To find him food in the air's wide ways
And mount and dive and hurry and fear
And wheel and circle and drop and career,
Another song would thrive in his throat:

A wild, uncontrolled, strange, yearning note,
A bud of the air as unconfined
As the wing of the searching, homeless wind.
But see him walk above the ground
(As if a bird should learn, forsooth,
The hum-drum dale and make-believe mound
Of a bounded field of a son of man!):
His birth and age, his years and youth

Are spent in looking down to scan;
His singing he ends before he began.
Yet for this very failure, friends,
I love the meadow-lark:
He has no speculations vague,
He apes no spirit's daily plague,
He weeps not o'er his soul's poor spark,
No vain ambition's dream he vends;
But he sings of the earth he knows,
Of the crop and the possible blight,
Of the genial sun and withering drouth,
Of rain and remembered snows;
And in the dawn he hints of night,
And, soberest fool by divinest right,
Shows kisses are hardly food for the mouth.
By heaven's decree he has learned the need
Of hunting on earth for the bug and the seed
And singing and walking and praying away
Through the lovely hours of gold or grey,
"Give us this day our daily bread,"
To me he shows the wiser head,
For the human cry and the call of the earth
Has mellowed in him his natural mirth,
Has tamed the perilous itch of wing
And the throat all ache to sing and sing.
And though he walks upon the ground,
I would my meadow-lark were crowned
By the grace of God a very king,
While over his head a viewless thing
Writing a cirque with the wake of wing,
Co-partner but clothed in undying fame,
His brother, akin not in blood but in name,
That English angel still chanted his dream!

*The young sun runs above the field;
The dun clouds wheel and yield:
A happy omen,—ah, but hark!
The meadow-lark.*

SONG

ON the snow
I can show
Where delicate feet have been:
In their traces
Smile new faces,
Violets and their kin.

It is Spring.
Come to bring
Buds and birds and gentler air;
Who will hold her,
Woo, control her,
Keeping earth so happy, so fair?

Under the sun
Only one
Shall bid her fold the yearning wing:
The true lover
He shall discover
And chain with a kiss eternal Spring!

TWO GIRLS

I.

400 B. C.

HER basket high with little loves,
In the white sunshine, whiter far
Sitteth quick-eyed Aglaia.
Not mother Maia
To her boy gave more prosperous star
Than on this girl she of pure doves.
How sweetly low she calls
To Polydorides
And from her knees
With trembling choice doth seize
And give one cherub for his halls!
Aglaia, tell how long it was before,
Thy basket bare, his garland graced thy door!

II.

1900 A. D.

THE level moon silvers my love and me,
Her improvising at the muffled keys,
And me interpreting at pensive ease
A sunny city near the violet sea.
Like some Aglaia dead
Touching the loves her basket keeps,
My love doth call from airy deeps
Sweet cherubs into throbbing life.
Awhile they babble and grow warm in strife,
Anon they kiss and sinks each drowsy head.
At last her touch is lyric with one song—
My cherub of her choosing from her throng!

SONG

I WALKED into my garden green
Ere flowers bloom:
A hidden fragrance charmed the scene
Like whispering gloom.

Opening lips and haunting hair
And utterless words
In faint waldmeister breath so rare
Flew up like birds.

HOROSCOPE

READ me not stars how they stared
When that she first drew breath;
Read me her eyes and I know
Sweet life or the bitter of death.

Death—not the ceasing to breathe;
Life—not the taking of air;
Spirit that vainly desires,
Dies in the birth of despair.

LINES TO A WOOD-THRUSH

WHEN bare boughs in the springtime hide their
buds

And swell with lustihood of gathered year,
When the blind brook runs feeling many ways,
Sweet April month has spent her timely tear.

A laughter-gendered tear of grace and joy
To cheer the timid orphans into light
And drench their waiting lips with weird per-
fumes

And teach them veil their eyes against the night.
When greens the slender path within the wood
I listen to the triple melody
The wood-thrush coy sends mystic, alien, swift,
As if a bud burst into song near by.

APRIL

WOOED of masters Sun and Dew,
Which to wed she never knew;
One day she would smile on one,
Next day frown and bid him run.
Sun would say: "How cold is Dew!
He is not the mate for you!"
Dew would say: "How false is Sun!
Of his kiss are flowers undone!"
So she pledged with kisses light
Sun by day and Dew by night,
Yet each day to vex the two
Sends his sister traitor Dew.

SONG

THERE'S a voice in the song I sing,
I call to it singing with mine:
Like a bird, bereft, on the wing,
I yearn to thee, spirit divine.

Thou art all the soul of me said,
The one tone, the adequate phrase;
I touch but thy lips—thou art fled:
I am earth, a mere creature of days.

THE HUNTERS

HERE in the snow is the trace,
Chill is the spring sun's face;
The hunters sing as they go.
(*But what of her, the doe?*)

The air is intoxication
And light gives eye inspiration.
The hunters sing as they go.
(*But what of her, the doe?*)

Almost the quarry outworn
Will offer her body heart-torn.
The hunters sing as they go.
(*But what of her, the doe?*)

The beast, men say, is for this,
Born for a bullet's kiss.
The hunters sing as they go.
(*But what of her, the doe?*)

Nor less in the city ways cold
The hunters are hunting with gold:
Shall God not beg to know:
“*What of her, the doe?*”

WARUM?

(*A Reading of Schumann.*)

Do you remember one retreat
Where stream and glancing sunlight meet?
The mill-wheel then had ceased to know
The driving waters years ago;
And, as we tarried, even then
Long dead had lain the little glen;
Beneath the vaulting trees the light,
One mellow amber to the sight,
Seemed moving like a dimming dream
Above the sward, along the stream,
Among the moss upon the rock;
There was no sound the peace to mock,
No strident shriek, no meadow call
Of tiny droves in grassy stall;
Alone the water dared to speak
In decent whispers low and meek
As might a nun where one had died
Who never knew the crucified;
The starry moss was all the flower
That smiled in that funereal bower.
I made a wild-ring of two sprays
Strong-twisted in a thousand ways
To cheat the pride of rounded gold
That glows the same though love be cold.
And you agreed and we were young
And words were firstborn on the tongue . . .
I speak as if you would reply;
But well I know that till I die,
Forsake the amber of the dream,
Forget the whisper of the stream,
I may not trace your spirit where
It glorifies the hiding air;
But of the wild-ring I may think

That girt your finger at the brink.
Though tears be spent and anguish past,
Ever the question at the last:
If wisely works the Hand or not
That takes the beauty, leaves the blot;
That keeps old age a rebel still
And murders youth to do Its will?
Then the white angel face at night
To smile in silence, render right,
To teach the rebel mood to cease
Since good is God, His will is peace.

SONG

Not that I miss the love you gave
Ask I the spoken word,—
Bird o' the bough may bind the soul
With melody unheard.

I know not the whence and the why,
But only this is clear:
How sweet the old confessing strain,
Just this, "I love you dear!"

QUEST

Up, song, and find a melody,
One in the wide world thine;
Woo her until she needs must sigh,
"Ah, love, would thou wert mine!"

Thou hast no soul, thus lone, unwed;
Thy life is but to die;
But on her breast thy hidden head
Wears immortality.

A THEME FROM CHOPIN

(*F sharp major impromptu.*)

SWEET, my love, in the autumn time
When the lips are gone that kissed in prime,
To hear slip, slip the dead, dry leaves
And the doubting birds in the shelter of eaves.

Sweet, my love, to drink the chill air,
To lift one's eyes to old boughs that are bare,
To wonder whither the crickets are fled
Or what they can dream that they left unsaid.

Sweet, my love, when the fruits are in,
When the hands that plucked seem phantom-thin,
That amid all changes, seasons, decay,
With love in the heart no soul turns grey.

AUGUST

RUNS no music from the trees,
Song is drainéd to the lees;
Only from the blazing earth
Chuckle-chant of cricket-mirth.
On the sea young hurricanes
Lade their wings with scourging rains;
On the land the cyclones wheel
And affrighted cities reel.
Sirius with shifting glare
Hurls pale, frantic stars through air.
Fortunate the daily wane:
Springtime's fervor is insane.

CITY SOUNDS

A WITHERED old woman of sixty or more
(*Hale her to bedlam and bury her there!*)
Sits over the way grinding o'er and o'er
A poor old organ wheezy and sore.

Her eyes are as dead as a seaside stone
(*Hale her to bedlam and bury her there!*)
There live in the organ three sounds alone
To save the one tune from a dreary drone.

A motherless maid? Bore she never a child?
(*Hale her to bedlam and bury her there!*)
An impostor, perhaps, with the town defiled?
'Twas Christ, I think, who bade us be mild.

SONG

As flowers wait for the morn
So I for thy face,
Or sleeping or wistfully born
By God's fair grace.

As water is hushed for the wind,
I for thy foot's fall,
Or bird for notes that are kind
With love's quick call.

I had slept with pain:
At the thought of thee
To his wings hath he ta'en,—
Thou alone with me.

QUATRAINS

APART

ONE said: "I will not hurry with the throng;
I would from this cold peak command the scene."
An idle hope to sing a far-heard song,
Nor grows he seer who watches overlong.

THE REVEALER

To those who sit in twilight of the mind
When all the spirit questions, waits, and dreams,
Comes he, the poet, healer of the blind,
A faint star there, a hid moon here, to find.

SHAKSPERE

IT IS as if to others when they sought,
Nature her wayward eyes aye turned aside;
But when with careless gaze this rover came,
Their eyes met silently, candid and wide.

THE PIANIST

THE master said he played for us
Of the marvelous twelve, eleven:
The one he played for himself I know
For I saw the glory of heaven.

SPRING RAINDROPS

“IN white we started on our way
And whirled and eddied night and day;
But when earth sang that dreamy air,
In tears we fell amid her hair.”

ODORS

SOME dead queen sleeping in her bridal clothes
Which singing fingers wrought with daedal care:
The very threads are sweet with breath of rose
As if she lived a fragrant death. Who knows?

SYMBOLS

I SAW a sea in fury,
I saw a wreck-strewn shore:
Saw I not love unmastered,
Souls lost evermore?

ON ONE OBSCURE

HERE let him lie, in this lone resting place
Far from the roadway and its obscene dust:
He loved not many,—here and there a face;
So, let him dream of them a little space.

FASCINATION

The Snake speaks:

I HEARD thee singing from afar,
Bright master of the air!
Let me not dare
To dim a star.

Along the hum-drum ground I yearned
Rib-sore to make me thine.
Might eyes but shine
As that strain burned!

My heart holds no swift-measured pain
That God of snakes made birds,—
Our dreams, your words,
Our loss, your gain,—

And yet I hiss no curse on fate,
No love I fain entreat;
Pity would meet
My vile estate.

If I distract,—I'll turn my head....
(Whew! Just in time I ran.
No honest man
To filch my bread.)”

SONG

Ask me not the senseless names
Of flowers, laughing flowers,—
Children of the pleasant sun
With veins athirst for showers.

Winds and the bees have mocked us all,
O flowers, laughing flowers;
If we would a beauty keep,
It runs to other bowers.

Give a name to serious earth,
Not flowers, laughing flowers;
Fickle seed and sudden death—
Only these are ours.

THE PALMER PRAYS

I HAVE not viewed, O Lord, Thy tomb
Nor in the manger gazed;
These later eyes the blessed gloom
And joy never amazed.

Though these to me, O Lord, are naught
But pictures in the mind,
And Thee my feet in vain have sought
To walk until I find.

Yet open Thou, O Lord, my breast
And loose my fettered love;
Breathe on its wings untiring quest;
Make it Thy holy Dove;

And bid it fare from pole to pole
Nor bow for diadem
Till with its hope each human soul
Becomes a Bethlehem.

INDEPENDENCE DAY, 1898

DECKED gay with flags and confident with lights,
Onward our ship sails through the endless nights;
Only applause and mad huzzas we hear
And high with pride heed neither storms nor
fights.

So we speed on in ease, why conjure fears?
Fine man the captain, whom we load with cheers.
This freedom of the sea is full of fame!
Hush! Those who heave the coal are mutineers!

SONG

LOVE, it is not death I dread,—
Light withdrawn and joying sped;
But that when you weep
I must hear yet sleep.

Love, that is the utter sting,
That is the bitter, bitter thing:
My song mewed in my heart
And from it thou apart.

FEBRUARY

THOUGH none keener than her stings,
There is healing in her wings.
Hungry fields begin to hope;
Odors faint begin to grope
Feelingly at morn and eve;
Like a lover the sun doth leave
With red eyes the spouséd earth
For a morrow's earlier mirth;
Shaped and molded of sky and dew
Drops a musical thing of blue,
And some dawn with breast of fire
Robin heralds the coming choir.

IN THE HEART OF A WOOD

(*Rustic Dionysia: 450 B C*)

SATYR

No outcry, girl!
But, like a pearl,
Rest in a sea of bliss.
By the white dove!
What hour to love
More softly wins than this?

The sun is spent;
The firmament
Shows red the hunted cloud;
The night-wind sings
With ripple of wings:
List, girl, and be not proud.

Against the west
I have a nest
Arched by a willow's arms;
And by it trips
With busy lips
A stream to cheat alarms.

There, lest it grow
Too cold below
My body as I lie,
A panther sleeps
Daylong and keeps
It warm till I come nigh.

A laurel stands
With heaped up hands
Of cherries just in reach,
And but a pace
With steady grace
Ripens the lush-cheeked peach.

Still no caress?
Must I confess
Long hours on waiting knees?
Thy wild, wild eyes
Must I surprise
With kissing till love please?

Out on my will!
How dost thou chill
My heart, till now one flame?
What mystery
Doth hidden lie
In brows that teach me shame?

Forgive me, spare
Me! Is it fair
A goddess walk the earth
Disguisé so,
When mortals throw
The symbols in mad mirth?

My wine-stung cheek
It was bade seek
The rage of Venus' rule,—
Hear me and save,
My life I crave!

(*Thunderbolt*)

Save me, Demeter!—

DEMETER

Fool!

(*He dies*)

SONG

I AWOKE in the night
To the call of a bird—
Ere the morning light
The flash of a word:
*“Sweet sleep I sing thee,
Winnow thee, wing thee!”*
'Twas all I heard.

And the round, happy note
Of the tawn oriole,
Like a drifting boat,
In the night found a goal:
*“Sweet sleep I sing thee,
Winnow thee, wing thee!”*
God guard thy soul.

DREAM-POEM

*The marges of the waterway
May never kiss, may never play:
The hither brake with yonder willow
May never share the selfsame pillow.*

Where poppies once had spread a silken sheen,
I lay and watched the seed-cups offer sleep;
The vagrant moon upraised her lean old hands
And waved them to and fro and muttered deep
The magic lore wherein is she the queen.

Came they to whom death gave no peace, no rest:
They who in tasting life found life so sweet
That afterflight made barren alien lands;
Thirst all their blood and vanity their quest,
Through wayless fields they hurry anxious feet.

Both young and old uttered their litanies
Unto the deaf queen clad in tattered cloud,
That she would charm their temples for a space,
Whisper the secret of the stars most wise
Who, low beside the queen, shine yet most proud.

* * * * *

I saw e'en little babies hollow-eyed,
With tiny hands begging one tiny grain
To soothe the body till it learn some grace,
Since nature cruel to their months denied
The complement to ripen and make sane.

* * * * *

And men of many climes and many ages
Whom beauty drove delirious with joy
And who were fain to celebrate her name;
And women who for love filled dreary pages
The while fate fashioned of their souls a toy;

And gentle girls, too carelessly elect,
Who chose luxurious days and barred love out
And stared and starved and wondered whose the
blame;
And eager boys who schemed and last were
checked,
Whom hounding rage of riches put to rout:

Endless they prayed, as endless prayed in vain:
The seed-cups emptied ever in wide air.
Wild birds wove ominous midnight melodies
Of unfulfilled desire and useless gain
And of the unwed moon and parchéd bear.

Upward the weeping dead in spirals flew,
Blotting the light of all the waiting stars;
And then the world grew glad of morning's eyes
Wherein to-day men plan to-morrow's rue
And women stab their souls and hide the scars.

*The marges of the waterway
May never kiss, may never play:
The hither brake with yonder willow
May never share the selfsame pillow.*

WILD-FLOWER

ONCE in a field after harvest-time
Where the proud-belted grain had stood,
I saw a blossom, a tardy chime
Of the singing when voices were good.

Sunlight had opened the little heart wide
For me to bend down and know;
And I learned her whole life ere she faded and
died
In her home now shrouded with snow.

This is the singular joy of it all
That her name is a secret to me;
E'en though her kin by their name I may call,
My sweet love alone is she.

SONG

AND it's oh! for the mounting sun,
And it's oh! for the soaring bird,
And it's oh! for the lift of my soul to-day
Singing and being heard.

Ah me! for the coming night,
Ah me! for the desolate bird,
Ah me! for the sob of the desperate soul
In vain, alone, unheard.

AUTUMN CONFESSORAL

INTO the wildwood I will go
And dream the world away;
No merry bird the path will show
But the ever-sighing day.

I know a hidden mere therein,
Yearly it reads my face;
The shadowy thought and unwrought sin
Run to that soft embrace.

Above the endless leagues I lean,
Leagues of transparent truth;
Into those liquid bowers green
I weep my bitter ruth.

And then beside the holy marge
One night is mine to dream,
For down will fall the magic barge
And find a spirit-stream.

And some day at the birth of morn
My barge will take her flight;
My grey, sad city, spent and worn,
Will be beyond my sight.

NOVEMBER

NOTHING human in her air,
Memoried her icy stare:
She knows sorrow to the heart
And the world's tame word and art.
Leaden-grey her simple gown
Wherein she, untouched of town,
Counts her old, cheap rosary
With her face up toward the sky.
I would crawl the endless mile
Just to see her one pure smile,—
Smile whereon the angels wait
Wide to open heaven's gate.

DECEMBER

IN her folds of fallen snow
Sacred earth seems moving slow
Like a hoar priest fillet-bound
As he leads mid solemn sound
Lamb or goat or ox gold-horned.
In her hand her wand, leaf-thorned
Holly with its sanguine berry,
And the mistletoe—ah, very
Pale that magic berry lies:
Symbols both of sacrifice.
Hark! what bells bud with the morn?
“Lo, the Prince of Peace is born!”

SONG

OUT of the cold, dry stem
Leaps a bud, as a gem
Takes fire when the sun finds its heart.
Out of the bud a flower
Born of a light May shower
Waked up in the night with a start.

Out of the flower the fruit
Comes lush from the bending shoot
Low to the air made glad as a child...
Only the cold, dry stem—
Fruit flown and the sweet-born gem—
Sleeps with the great Mother mild.

THE AVENGER

THE white bird of day is dead:
Night, the hawk, fell on him suddenly.
The happy throat sang as it bled,
Dropping its scarlet feathers along the sky...
The hawk grows glut on his prey;
But the calm-eyed stars,
Whom he ever unbars,
Know the avenger is on the way.

THE WHOLE STORY

JUST my hand held so
 Across mine eyes
 Blots out the sun:
Little thing, a hand,—
 All said and done—
 To hood wide skies.

All this room is dark
 Save that one streak
 The keyhole sends:
Little thing, a soul,
 That earth's gloom rends,
 Learning to speak!

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